

## Antiquity Of Navigation In India

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*Abstract: It is generally believed that like other laws, the law of the sea is a product of western European Christian civilization, and a product of the conscious activity of the European mind, belief and based on their practices. To which non-European countries have contributed practically little or nothing, while the European state practices were developed and consolidated only during last three centuries.*

*Same of the ancient countries, like China, Egypt, Assyria and Europe, India with quite advanced forms of civilizations, might have certain generally accepted principles and rules of Inter-state as well as outer-state regarding the sea.*

### I. ANTIQUITY OF NAVIGATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

In the early period of history, India had assumed the status of a prosperous country in both the fields of commerce and cultural development. The rays of civilization had reached India in the formative period of its existence. As India was treated by westerners, a golden bird, hence the western countries had been attracted for commercial relations with India from the very beginning.

Joseph Desomogyi of west Germany wrote that, from the time immemorial, the western traders and sailors have endeavored to reach the stupendously rich countries of the east. First of all they have been attracted by India, then also by the land of the precious stone (Ceylon), the silk land (Indo-China) and the spice land (Indonesia). He further states that, India has continuously been visited by merchants from faraway lands, India is very favorably situated half way between the far east on the one hand and the two cradles of the white man's civilization, western Asia and Egypt on the other. It is true, from the remote antiquity upto the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., The Indian merchants had been traded from the southern ports of the Peninsula with Mesopotamia on the winds of the Monsoons. J.Kennedy gives a brief account of antiquity of navigation in Indian Ocean. He writes There is said to be some convincing evidence of maritime trade existing in 600 B.C. between the ports of Gujrat in India and Babelon'. From the time immemorial the regularity of winds in Indian Ocean was came to be known to Indian and Arab mariners as a reliable

and pleasant source of power for sailing. The North-East Monsoons enabled voyages to be made with large ships from the Indian coasts to Burma, Malaya and to all the east Indies as well as other favorable good seasonal winds also be used to go to Indo-China and the Philippines and China. Indian Teak was used in the construction of ships, the coconut provide the cordage to tie the planks and also flax and cotton for the sails. At that time ship building had become an employment giving flourishing industry both for Ocean and river traffic.

### II. SEA BORNE TRADE OF INDIA IN PRE-MAURYAN PERIOD

Hindu scriptures and history have sufficient reliable evidence to prove this fact, that India was regarded as the central place of commercial activities through navigation in sea with Phoenicians, Jews, Assyrians, Greeks, Egyptians and Romans in ancient period, also with Portuguese, Dutch and English etc. At that time India imports Tin, Lead, Glass, Amber, Steel for arms, Corals and Medicinal Drugs from Europe and from western Asia, while India supplied Wool of the sheep, Onyx chalcedony, Lapis-lazulic and Jasper, Fur and Musk. The most important valuable item of the export of India was Silk, which was exchange with Gold with the Persian empire. This silk was manufactured in India and was also imported from China for sale in western countries. The Pepper, Cinnamon and other edible spices were exported to Europe at high rate.

Through immemorial period India established himself in a unique position of main suppliers of luxurious articles in exchange of gold metal to the western countries, like Babylon and Egypt and countries of west. The commerce by sea between India and Babylon must have been carried on as early as 3000 B.C.

For the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., some direct reliable evidences are forth coming, may be presented as follows-

- ✓ Abeam of Indian Cedar in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 B.C.), at Birs Nimrud, now this is a part of British Museum,
- ✓ Two rough logs of Indian Teak wood was found in the second storey of the temple of the Moon, (rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonides (555-538 B.C.) and this wood was exported to Babylonia from India certainly,
- ✓ First Peacock to Babylon from India was taken through sea by Bebru Jataka near about-400 B.C., while the folk-tale on which it is based, must be much older, and
- ✓ Rice, Peacocks, Sandal wood, Teak and others certain Indian commodities, were known to the Greeks and others under Indian names in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and these were exported from the west coast of India into Babylon directly by sea. The presence and existence of the early maritime commerce in ancient India, as supported by Rigved and by the evidences of Egyptian and Assyrian Archaeology, has certain allusions to holy Bible also. During the Mosac period (1491-1450 B.C.), Precious stones appear to have been well known and were already highly valued as well as to a great extent a specialty of India and the neighbors. Hence it is well established conclusion that, there was a mature commerce by the Sea between India and western countries, like Babylon and Egypt much before the advent of Mauryas in Indian history.

### III. TRADE BY NAVIGATION IN SEA DURING MAURYAN PERIOD

The Mauryan period starts nearabout-325 B.C. at the end of Alexander's campaign in India. According to the reliable estimate of Ptolemy, nearly 800 vessels were engaged in the service of 8000, troops, several thousand horses and vast quantities of supplied as well as an extraordinary huge fleet built of India wood by India craftsman.

Shipbuilding in India during the Mauryas period was a regular, employment giving and flourishing industry monopolized by the central government and their voyaged were regularly done to the Burnee coast and the Malay, Peninsula and Indonesia to the east and to Persia and Socotra in the west.

During period (321-291 B.C.), the emperor Chandragupta Maurya, create and organize a Board of Admiralty, as one of the six Boards. During this period a great book regarding Hindu Politics, Arthasastra was written by the Prime Minister of the said emperor, Cahankya alias Kautilya. This book throws light on the condition of the national shipbuilding, shipping, navigation and sea-borne trading system of India in the glorious period of Mauryas. Arthasastra of Kautilya describes that, the Naval Department was well-organized

handed by an officer known as 'Superintendent of Ships'. He was incharge of all the matters related to navigation, including not only navigation of Oceans but also inland navigation in rivers and in lakes natural and artificial both and had complete control over sea-going ships within the area to which his jurisdiction extended. During the Ashok period (Third century B.C.), India has developed a systematic maritime connections with Eyria, Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia and Epirus in the west and Ceylon, Burna, the south Asian islands and China in the east.

The age of Mauryas was followed by the age of Andhras in the south and Kushans in the north.

### IV. MARITIME TRADE OF INDIA WITH ROME

The union of the western world was under the authority of one man in the person of Julius Ceasar and later in Augustus. The Seleucos Nicotar, the great king had sent Megasthenes to Chandragupta Maurya, near about the end of fourth century B.C. as well as Dennachos was sent to Vidusara, the Successor of the said Chandragupta Maurya. Emperor Ashok, the son of Vindusara, had sent missionaries and ambassadors to Anyigonos II of Syria, Ptoleny II of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatos of Macedonia, Mergas of Cyrene and Alexander II of Epirous, Ashok also sent his son, Mahindra and daughter, Sanghmitra to Sri Lanka with the tree of Buddha. During period of emperor Augustus several embassies from various Indian states visited Rome frequently. To inaugurate a direct trade system between Egypt and India, Augustus built new and especially large ships, he also established diplomatic relations with the Arab-ports and instate a form of Roman-Arab partnership, to understand the trade with India, and sent presents to the rulers and the chiefs their. Silk from China, Fine Muslin, Diamonds, Onyx, Sardonyx, Agate, Sarei, Carmelion, Crystal, Amethyst, Beryl, Pearls, Jewls, Drugs, Indian Pepper, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloves, Cosmetics and other luxurious things were export from India to the fashionable world of Rome. Pepper and dry Ginger of India, were sold, weight by weight with Gold in Rome. During the reign of fifth emperor of Rome, Nero, the trade of India with Rome reached its maximum height. Besides this trade, the raw materials for Roman industry were also purchased from India. Such as Silk and Cotton Yarn for weaving, Woods and dyes and uncut precious stones. Manufactured goods made from imported raw materials were paid for the imported luxuries of India. Roman Historian, Strabo stated, that number of ships sailed to India every year, was extend 100 in lieu of 30, after the discovery of Monsoon winds of India Ocean.

'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' written by Pilny, after several years of personal experience of travel, is a first merchant's practical guide book for Indian Seas. This book describes details of Harbors, Marts, Anchorages, Tides, prevailing Winds, Local Tribes and rulers, Exports, Imports as well as the coast along the Red sea, east Africa, Arabia and the eastern coast of India details and so on. This book shows how well the routes were known, and how commerce like and amicable were the relation between traders from different countries. To guide the ships to port at night the Chola kings had built Light houses with brick and mortars. In the second

century A.D., the Roman geographer Ptolemy described existence of sea coast marts from the Red sea to India and beyond. Some where in southeast Asia, where Non-Roman dues were levied by Non-Roman authorities. The southeast, or Coromandal coast was the busiest coast of India, where large ships from the east came with huge quantities of pepper and other commodities. In the port warehouses were built to store these commodities and thereafter re-exported to the west.

#### V. NAVIGATION DURING GUPTA DYNASTY

During first century A.D. navigation from Kalinga arrived in Java, in search of Gold and settled down there and spread the Hindu civilization in the southeast Asia. Till three or four centuries, there was a fairly large-scale migration from India and various 'Hinduized' or 'Indianized' states were established in Champa (Thailand), in Combodia (Compuchia), in Java & Sumatra and in other areas of Indonesia and developed, Hindu-Buddhist culture there. It is also noticeable that till eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the connection between India and 'Indianized' states of southeast Asia, was religious and cultural, but not political. India established only a cultural empire out side India and nothing more. These close religious and cultural relations between India and these Hindu-Buddhist mixed southeast Asian kingdoms were maintained through uninterrupted sea traffic, which was regularly done from the sea port of East coast of India. In this period maritime relations were developed not only with China but also with Japan. Ceylon by this time had become a flourishing country and had established commercial relation with India as well as with the other countries of the east, such as Malay, Peninsula and Indo-China.

#### VI. FA-HIEN'S TRAVELS

Fa-Hien, had left a reliable record of his return sea voyage from Tamluck, a port at the mouth of river Ganga at Bengal to China, from where he took a merchant ship to Ceylon then he departed to the Mala (Malabar) coast on an Indian Merchant vessel, containing near about two hundred persons mainly merchants and this said vessel has a smaller vessel in tow for safety purpose, thereafter he reached Java and took another Indian ship to go to China. Ancient Tamil literature and the Greek and Roman authors prove that during first two centuries, the port of Coromandal or Chola coast enjoyed the benefits of active commerce with west as well as east. The Chola's fleet boldly crossed the Bay of Bengal to the mouth of the river Ganga and Irrawaddy, and the Indian Ocean to the Islands of the Malay Archipelago. Chola kings in their dynasty established lighthouses, built by bricks and stones to exhibit lights to guide ships to port at night.

The south eastern or Coromandal coast was the busiest coast of India at that time, so many large ships from the east coast came there with huge quantities of pepper as well as with other commodities, at this port warehouses were built to store these commodities and there after to re-export to the west.

The ancient kingdom of Kalinga has done pioneer work in the maritime navigation on the eastern sea board and which extended from the mouth of river Ganga to the mouth of river Krishna for so many centuries. In this way, there is no doubt that the trade and intercourse between south east Asian countries and Indian states were extended to far greater extent during the period of Gupta and Harsha Vardhana and attains its heights during the fifth to sixth century of our era.

#### VII. NAVIGATION IN SEA DURING SRI VIJAY DYNASTY

Sri Vijay empire attains its heights due to the development of trade through sea via Strait of Malacca in the last of seventh century. To control over the Strait of Malacca, the kings of Sri Vijay extends their authority over Malaya, Sumatra and Java and warred against Champa as well as Annam. On account of having better navigation skill, better sea worthy ships and establishment of unified control over access corridors to the south China and Java sea and having a powerful Navy Army to swept the ships against the pirates and corsairs, there was a landmark increase in the seaborne trade. In Sri Vijay's market, thousands of traders, largely intinerant, drawn from many lands had come to compete with others. The government realized substantial income from service rendered in refitting ships, providing supplies and affording a safe haven, where traders could wait for the shift of monsoon winds. Although Sri Vijay kings remained the strongest power in the sea, yet the freedom of the sea and navigation of all ships were never interfered. Controlled or monopolized by anybody. All southeast Asian states, Persians, Arabs, Chinese, Ceylonese and by the people of India, used the seas for trade and enjoyed its bounties to perfect peace and without any hindrance, only disturbances were created by the pirates and corsairs. Who were suppressed by the powerful kings near their coastal areas. Between year 1003 and 1018 Sri Vijay sent seven tributary missions to China, advertising the availability of south Asian products as well as perfumed goods, spice and pepper. In year 1015, Cholas also sent a mission to same country for the same purpose as well as eastern Java also. In this tripartite struggle, the Chole emperor Rajendra I has defeated the Sri Vijay empire in year 1025, and result of this fruitless naval war lasting into weakened of Sri Vijay power as well as the Cholas and opened the way for Muslims supremacy in the thirteenth century.

#### VIII. MARCO POLO'S TESTIMONY ABOUT NAVIGATION

In the end of eleventh century during the Sung Dynasty, in China, the Compass was discovered by the Chinese which revolutionize the art of navigation. The Qubilai Khan. The great Mongol emperor of the Yuan dynasty replaced the Sung dynasty in China during (1279-1368). He sent tribute missions to its emperors, to maintain China's traditional sovereignty over all the southeastern states of Asia. In year-1286, Ilkhan, (relative of Qubilai Khan) sent his ambassadors to Peking, with the aim of selecting a Mongol princess of Qubilai Khan's

tribe to be his second wife, because his first wife died. At that time overland route from Peking to Tabriz was imperiled by war. Having met the Polos, they decide to go Persia from Peking with princess Maiden together with Polos through sea route. By sea route from the Chinese port of Zaitum, in the province of Fo-Kien, they crossed the Gulf of Tong King to Champa in the southeast of Combodia, leaving Champa, they reached the inland of Bintang, at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca and then Sumatra, where the fleet was delayed for five months due to the blowing of the contrary Monsoon winds. Having gotten the favorable winds, they reached Ceylon by passing the Andaman and Nicobar islands. They put across to the coast of Coromandel, Masulipatam at the Madras coast, In the gulf of Cambay, Surat on the Bombay side, thereafter they reached Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and passed inland to Khorassan and to Persia and to their destiny.

#### IX. IBN BATTUTA'S TESTIMONY ABOUT NAVIGATION

In the fourteenth century near about-1333, A Muslim traveler reached Calicut, by passing the Arbain sea. He confirmed Marco Polo's account of maritime navigation and commerce in Asia specially in India. He found various merchants came from several countries in Calicut, according to him at that time Calicut, was the largest harbor of the world. He went to China through various southeast Asian ports.

#### X. MING DYNASTY OF CHINA AND TRADE BY SEA TO INDIA

Ming dynasty of Yuan in China, continued the policy of Quibailai Khan, to demand tributes from countries of the eastern region and to increase the commerce through sea with southeast Asia including India. Since- 1368 to early fifteenth century Ming dynasty between- 1405 and 1431 sent seven large naval expeditions, under the command of Chang-Ho to the India, with the object to reopen commerce through sea with India, Ceylon and beyond.

#### XI. SPREAD OF ISLAM

As already discussed, due to downfall of Sri Vijay as well as the Cholas, from Indian history, ocean trade in the Indian seas, was gone in possession of Aarab hands. Although the kings of the Gujarat and Calicut maintained maritime commerce with east coast of Africa, yet the supremacy of the ocean routes had passed to the Arab certainly. In the fifteenth century the north Sumatran ports was directly related to spread of Islam in southeast Asia, which was followed by Turkish Muslims in north India. In the beginning of the fourteenth century the Sultanate of Delhi expended to the important commercial region on the west coast of India as well as Gujarat coasts and the land was conquered and Islamized, as a result Gujarat shipping fell largely in Muslim hands, though

Hindus still remained very important in the maritime commerce as such.

#### XII. DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PORT OF MALACCA

The foundation and development of port of Malacca in southeast Asia in fifteenth century was the most important event, which play an exclusive role in increasing the maritime commerce in India. This port was became as an important entry port and commercial town for ships and for traders, travelling between India and Ceylon ports to China and other southeast Asian ports. During the fifteenth century or earlier the navigation in the Indian Ocean, was wholly dependent on the monsoon winds, hence traverse the entire Indian Ocean in a single monsoon was not possible, therefore the sea routes was divided into 'States' and for better performance several trans-shipment centers and markets came to develop, where merchants can stay and wait for favorable winds of India Ocean. Aden on the Persian coast, Ports in Gujarat coast, especially Surat, Randar, Diu and Daman, Ports of Malabar coast, Calicut and Ceylon were the main junction on the old long sea trade routes from west to east Asia and back. Although since beginning the India was basically land power, yet from the time immemorial, the India came to understand the secrets of monsoons in the Indian Ocean, which provides reliable and important sources of power at regular intervals. In the beginning of civilization, a regular ocean commerce had sprung up between India and Arabia, at that time there was uninterrupted freedom of navigation in Indian Ocean and the seas and the oceans were treated as open free for navigation to all the peoples of the world.

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